

Remarks

By way of the foregoing amendments, the specification has been amended to insert therein customary headings for sections of the specification, to correct obvious grammatical and/or idiomatic errors, and to remove references to specific claims.

In addition, the claims have been amended to remove any issue relating to indefiniteness. In view of these amendments, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112 is respectfully requested.

Given the improved clarity of the claims as amended, it will become apparent that the subject matter of the claims is neither disclosed nor suggested by the applied references, whether taken alone or in combination.

In particular, claim 1 recites components in the form of panels or planks, in combination with at least one clip, whereby the components can be assembled in side-by-side relationship and held together by the clip. The longitudinal edges of the components have matching projections and/or recesses by which the components can be joined. Each component has formed in the underside thereof respective longitudinal recesses extending, parallel to the longitudinal edges, and the clip has a base and first and second retaining elements extending upwardly from the base for engaging in the longitudinal recesses of the components at edge-proximate inside surfaces of the recesses to hold and press the components together. In addition, the second retaining element is in the form of a detent having a main portion extending obliquely from the base and terminating at an upturned locking element, and the main portion is resiliently displaceable downwardly into the plane of the base. None of the applied references has been found to disclose or suggest the components and clip of claim 1, wherein a second retaining element of the is in the form of a detent having a main portion extending obliquely from the base and terminating at an upturned locking element, and the main portion is resiliently displaceable downwardly into the plane of the base.

The other independent claim, claim 20, recites a clip for components in the form of panels or planks that can be assembled in side-by-side relationship and held together by the clip. The clip comprises a base and first and second upward projecting retaining elements, wherein the first retaining element is a flange element bent upward from the clip base, and the second retaining element is formed by a resiliently displaceable detent extending upward. The detent has a main portion extending obliquely from the base and terminating at an upturned locking element, and the main portion is resiliently displaceable downwardly into the plane of the base. The clip base also has a third retaining element extending upwardly therefrom and located between

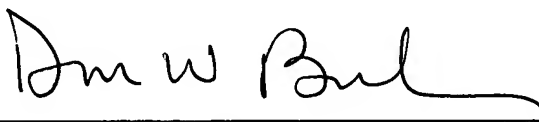
the first and second retaining elements, the third retaining element being arranged in opposition to the first retaining element for engaging a longitudinal edge of one of the components when the first flange element is engaged in a longitudinal recess adjacent the longitudinal edge. None of the applied references has been found to disclose or suggest the clip of claim 20.

The dependent claims recite still further features that are neither disclosed nor suggested by the applied references in a combination similar to that claimed.

In view of the foregoing, request is made for timely issuance of a notice of allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING (37 CFR 1.8a)

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Date: October 30, 2003


Jennifer A. Moore

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